United Nations A/62/376

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 October 2007

Original: English

Sixty-second session
Agenda item 54 (a)
Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

International Year of Planet Earth

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The International Year of Planet Earth begins in January 2008. Just how indispensable geoscientific knowledge can be in mitigating natural disasters has been graphically demonstrated by events like the Indian Ocean tsunami and hurricane Katrina. Yet, geologic knowledge benefits all of society all of the time, because everything that we cannot grow — all the power and raw materials on which society depends — comes from the Earth and therefore has to be discovered by geologists.

With fewer students selecting geoscience courses, Earth scientists fear we may be heading for a collapse of geologic educational infrastructure worldwide, since by the time rising prices encourage further exploration, historically low student recruitment may have already led to the closure and dispersal of the educational infrastructure. Because of the central importance of Earth sciences to global society, this possibility should worry everyone.

The United Nations supports sustainable use of the Earth's resources. With a strong focus on public outreach, the International Year of Planet Earth — initiated jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Union of Geological Sciences — urges political leaders to act. It has the potential to raise public and political awareness of the central place that Earth materials hold in everyday life, and to enhance the application of such knowledge, with a view to fostering a safer, healthier and wealthier society.

* The present report was prepared in consultation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Submission of the report was delayed so as to incorporate the latest information on preparatory activities for the Year.

07-52404 (E) 091007

Fifty years ago, International Geophysical Year achieved a similar reversal. More recently, in Germany, a national Earth Sciences Year (2002) has had measurable effects on student recruitment. The massive support so far achieved for this United Nations venture among the geoscientific community worldwide shows that many consider it a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to demonstrate the value of the geosciences to society, and to develop a new generation of experts equipped to support the service sector and industry.

Further information is available from www.yearofplanetearth.org.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Evolution of an idea	1–3	3
II.	Science programme	4–6	3
III.	Outreach programme	7–9	6
IV.	Advisory Group	10–11	8
V.	Geoscientific support; partners	12–15	9
VI.	Political support	16–17	10
VII.	Links with other initiatives	18	11
VIII.	Organization	19–20	11
IX.	National and regional committees	21–22	11
X.	Financial aspects	23–26	12

I. Evolution of an idea

1. The idea of an International Year of Planet Earth was launched in 2000 at a meeting of the Council of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS). Proclamation of an International Year was seen as a potentially powerful means of demonstrating how society could profit from the accumulated knowledge of the solid Earth as part of system Earth. Following a feasibility study, immediate support was provided by the Earth Science Division of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), making it a joint initiative of IUGS and UNESCO (Initiators). After broad consultation, it was decided in 2002 to seek proclamation of the International Year of Planet Earth by the United Nations General Assembly, with a view to providing the best possible exposure to national Governments.

2. On 26 August 2004, the joint Council of IUGS and the International Geological Congress, together representing Earth science communities in 140 countries and regions, adopted a Declaration on the International Year, in which it invited the Executive Board of UNESCO to adopt an International Year of Planet Earth, considering that:

(a) The geosciences could contribute significantly to a safer, healthier and wealthier world;

(b) This potential contribution was seriously underused by society and should be substantially increased;

(c) Proclamation of an international year under the aegis of States Members of the United Nations would help the Earth sciences make their full contribution to the sustainable stewardship of the planet.

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/192 of 22 December 2005, decided to declare 2008 as the International Year of Planet Earth. At least three years will be needed to realize most of the ambitious science and outreach plans, and the Year's triennium will thus run from 2007 to 2009.

II. Science programme

4. The Year's Science Programme Committee developed its terms of reference in 2002. Ten broad themes (see box below) provide the operational framework of the Year's science programme. Brochures were written by specialists and are available in both printed and electronic forms. Printing of the brochures has been made possible through the generosity of several European geologic surveys (those of Austria, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Spain and Sweden), ministries, national scientific bodies and UNESCO. All brochures may be downloaded from www.yearofplanetearth.org.

Themes of the International Year of Planet Earth

1. **Groundwater: towards sustainable use**

Groundwater is normally a renewable resource but great efforts based on proper knowledge should be taken to prevent depletion of this valuable resource for human communities and ecology.

2. **Hazards: minimizing risk, maximizing awareness**

Occurrences of several geo-hazards can already be predicted but not their precise timing; in all cases, however, knowledge-based planning measures can be taken to prevent unnecessary casualties and losses of property.

3. **Earth and health: building a safer environment**

Today, 3 billion people are affected by Earth-related health risks; by applying proper knowledge, many such risks may be mitigated.

4. **Climate: the "stone tape"**

The climate record of our planet is stored in rocks; proper "reading" of such records educates us about the non-human components in climate change now and in the past.

5. **Resource issues: towards sustainable use**

Earth resources may be both an asset and a risk for humanity; wise (sustainable) use of the Earth materials will reduce risks and increase assets available to global societies.

6. **Megacities: going deeper, building safer**

Big cities often have physical stability problems; by using geo-information, cities will become safer and options for underground space may become more realistic.

7. **Deep Earth: from crust to core**

Geologic processes in the deep Earth may surface through geo-hazards; knowing more about such processes may reduce the impact of such hazards.

8. **Ocean: abyss of time**

Our knowledge of ocean floors and ocean margins is still very limited; a better understanding would benefit human societies situated around the oceans.

9. **Soil: Earth's living skin**

There is more life under our feet than above us; a better use of soils would reduce hunger and thirst on this planet and sustain viable ecological conditions.

10. **Earth and life: the origins of diversity**

We can learn so much about conditions of life on Earth, in terms of biodiversity, extinction and development of new species, from the deep and more recent past.

5. Implementation of the science programmes will closely resemble the successful International Geoscience Programme (IGCP), another joint IUGS/UNESCO programme. The Year's science programme will operate essentially in "bottom-up" mode inviting scientists to submit proposals for the 10 science themes, preferably addressing the "key questions" mentioned in the science brochures, through Expressions of Interest (EoI's). These EoI's and subsequent proposals will be evaluated by science implementation teams (SITs), one for each of the themes. These teams are composed of from 8 to 10 experts and became effective in January 2007.

6. Science implementation teams membership includes:

Theme	*Team leader*	*Team members*
Groundwater	Vacant	Struckmeijer (Germany), Adelana (Nigeria), Jones (United Kingdom), Zhang (China), Xu (South Africa), Christian (United States), Wang (China)
Climate	Dodson (Australia) Vice-Chair Science Programme Committee	Alverson (United States), Nield (United Kingdom), Yuan (China), Yim (China), Wigand (Germany), Larocque (Canada), Meadows (South Africa)
Earth and health	Selinus (Senegal)	Centeno (United States), Finkelman (United States), Weinstein (Austria), Derbyshire (United Kingdom), Manay (Uruguay), Gogan (Tuvalu), Davies (United Republic of Tanzania)
Deep Earth	Cloetingh (Netherlands)	Mulugeta (Ethiopia), van der Pluijm (United States), Friedrich (Germany), Gabrielsen (Norway), Roure (France), Ludden (United Kingdom), Zoback (United States)
Megacities	Kraas (Germany)	Nennonen (Finland), Marker (United Kingdom), de Mulder (Netherlands), Coy (Australia), Aggarwal (India), Xue (China), Yu (Republic of Korea), Ribeiro e Sousa (Portugal)
Resources	Sinding-Larsen (Norway)	Shields (United States), Gleditsch (Norway), Ekdahl (Finland), Mienert (Norway), Cherkasov (Russian Federation), Kouda (Japan), Persson (Sweden)
Hazards	Beer (Austria)	Marsh (United Kingdom), Bobrowsky (Canada), Chadka (India), Cutter (United States), Pagliai (Italy), Supharatid (Thailand), Wu (Canada), Heuzé (United States)

Theme	*Team leader*	*Team members*
Ocean	Chen (China)	Lin (United States), Fischer (United States), Devey (Germany), Whitmarsh (United Kingdom), Cannat (France)
Soil	Hartemink (Netherlands)	Nortcliff (United Kingdom), Frossard (Sweden), Boettinger (United States), McBratney (Australia), Mendonca-Santos (Brazil), Zhang (China), Bationo (Kenya)
Earth and life	Talent (Australia)	Blieck (France), Codrea (Romania), Hartzhauser (Austria), Liebermann (United States), Mocanu (Romania), Reichenbacher (Germany), Shen (China)

III. Outreach programme

7. The Outreach Programme Committee has developed a website (www.yearofplanetearth.org), produced flyers and released thousands of general information brochures, leaflets (in many languages) and, with the kind assistance of the Chinese Ministry of Land and Resources, a dedicated brochure. The outreach programme will essentially operate in a "bottom-up" mode as well. Individuals and organizations are invited to submit EoI's, followed by proposals for realization, through the Year.

8. Implementation of the outreach programme will be undertaken largely at national levels. Countries and regions are encouraged to develop their own outreach programme. Some examples of the outreach programme are given below:

- Release of 4,567 biodegradable balloons, each representing 1 million years of Earth history, in London in January 2007, and other balloon launches across the globe (India, São Paulo, Portugal)
- Launch events with politicians, scientists and representatives of industry, evaluating options for a better use of Earth science for solving societal problems
- The World's International Year of Planet Earth launch event, which will be held in Paris on 12 and 13 February 2008
- African launch event to be held in Arusha on 22 and 23 May 2008
- Transparent Earth, through a 1:1 million world digital geologic map (OneGeology) supported by geological surveys around the world, Commission for the Geological Map of the World, IUGS, UNESCO and International Steering Committee for Global Mapping
- DVD on sustainable mineral exploration (International Association on the Genesis of Ore Deposits; Society for Geology Applied to Mineral Deposits)
- TV documentary on Earth sciences (American Geological Institute)
- International conference on indigenous geo-knowledge and geoscience

- Musical symphony: planet Earth, China
- Issuance of a book on geo-poetry
- 40,000 copies of a coffee-table book on the Year and its partners
- International congresses with focus on the Year at International Geological Congress and International Geographical Union (2008), Geological Society of America (2007, 2008 and 2009), etc.
- First world conference of young earth scientists, 2008
- Development of international standards in geo-information (Centre for Geo-Information)
- Quality-control medical geology terminology (International Association for Medical Geology)
- Launch of *Nature Geoscience* journal in 2008
- Creation of the Institute on Earth Science for Underground Cities
- Structural and plate kinematics map of the world (1:50 million, Commission for the Geological Map of the World)
- Metallogenic and geologic map of the Middle East (1:5 million, Commission for the Geological Map of the World)
- United Nations stamps for the Year, to be issued in 2008
- Launch of a Springer journal entitled *Geoheritage*
- A free CD-ROM on over 300 relevant papers on geoscience for society (publisher: Wiley)
- Focus by mosaic artists on "planet Earth" in 2008
- Books on all 10 science themes, to be published by Springer

9. Moreover, many national initiatives are being developed, including:

- 18-wagon Year train crossing the Indian subcontinent (India)
- Exposure through national science congresses (India, Hungary, Bulgaria, etc.)
- The world's biggest deep-drilling research vessel ("Chikyu"), which will carry the Year's logo (Japan)
- Research grants for geoscientists from less developed countries (Austria)
- Participation by award-winning students from developing countries in the global Year launch event (France)
- Intelligent people approach versus intelligent design (Austria)
- Books, journals and articles (UNESCO, *Nature*, Germany, Canada, Netherlands, France, Bulgaria)
- Issue of Year stamps and coins (Australia, Netherlands)
- Wine and earth excursions (Australia)
- Fado song composed for the Year (Portugal)

- Year opening ceremony to be held in parliament and closure ceremony in senate (Spain)
- Geo-bus and geo-truck tours (Austria, Netherlands, Belgium)
- Exhibitions (Netherlands, United States of America, Austria, Germany, Islamic Republic of Iran, Canada)
- New earth science museum (Brazil)
- Teaching courses for journalists and teachers (United Republic of Tanzania, Germany, International Geoscience Education Organization)
- Rock concert dedicated to the Year in central Oslo
- Geoparks (China, Austria, Switzerland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Germany)
- Geotourism conference, Australia 2008
- World Landslide Forum, Japan 2008
- Third International UNESCO Conference on Geoparks, "Terra Vita", June 2008, Osnabrück, Germany
- Lecture tours and excursions (Austria, Netherlands, France)
- New Year concert in museum (Austria)
- Art competitions (Austria)
- Advertisement panels in subways and on trains (Austria)
- BasCamp tent, Switzerland
- Interactive website and maps (Austria)
- Earthlearning (International Geoscience Education Organization, United Kingdom)

IV. Advisory Group

10. Individuals wishing to contribute to the initiative and to support various activities through the science and/or outreach programmes may be invited to become Senior Advisers. The individuals making up this group will advise the Management Team concerning specific contributions to the activities for the Year. Senior Advisers are entitled to represent the Year and are encouraged to publicize the initiative as widely as possible. Currently, there are 48 such Senior Advisers.

11. A small number of highly distinguished individuals have agreed to serve as Goodwill Ambassadors for the Year. These include persons with prominent media profiles in the world's major language areas who are willing to promote the Year and its activities. Patrons include Heads of State and other world leaders who have expressed their willingness to extend their patronage to the Year. As of 1 February 2007, four Patrons had accepted our invitation: Sam Nujoma, Founding President of the Republic of Namibia; Benjamin W. Mkapa, until 2006, President of the United Republic of Tanzania; Sir Mark Moody-Stuart, President of the Board of Anglo American; and Ruud Lubbers, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

V. Geoscientific support; partners

12. By mid-2003, the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) and the International Geographical Union (IGU) had joined this initiative as Founding Partners and were soon followed by the International Lithosphere Programme (ILP), the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) and ISRIC — World Soil Information. Other such partners are the Geological Society of London (GSL) and the Geological Survey of the Netherlands (TNO). A consortium of three geoscientific associations/societies, affiliated to IUGS (International Association of Engineering Geologists and the Environment, International Society for Rock Mechanics, and International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering), had joined by mid-March 2005; the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA), and the American Geological Institute (AGI), by mid-June 2005; the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG), by late June 2005; and the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG), by early October 2005, when access to Founding Partnership was closed.

13. Together with the Initiators, the 12 Founding Partners constitute the backbone of the Year. They all have a seat on the Board of the Corporation and are thus responsible for implementation of the Year. They receive exposure through the Year's brochures, the Business Plan, the website and all other official publications of the Year.

14. Associate Partners will have actively supported the International Year of Planet Earth before implementation. They were invited to participate and bear co-responsibility in the science teams, thereby securing representation for their scientific interests within the Year's science programme. Associate Partners also have access to the outreach activities and may suggest such activities to the Outreach Programme Committee. By February 2006, access to Associate Partnership was closed and the final list of 26 Associate Partners reads as follows:

African Association of Remote Sensing of the Environment

Association of American State Geologists

Association of Geoscientists for International Development

Circum-Pacific Council for Energy and Mineral Resources

Commission for the Geological Map of the World

Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia

European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage

European Federation of Geoscientists

Geological Society of Africa

Geological Society of America

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO

International Association of Hydrogeologists

International Association on the Genesis of Ore Deposits

International Council for Science

International Geoscience Programme IGCP

International Palaeontological Association

International Permafrost Association

International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing

North American Committee on Stratigraphic Nomenclature

Northeastern Science Foundation (United States of America)

Science Council of Asia

Society for Geology Applied to Mineral Deposits

Society for Sedimentary Geology

Society of Economic Geologists

United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

United Nations University

15. As of March 2006, a new category of international partnership was introduced for new organizations actively supporting the ambitions of the Year upon its incorporation. Non-commercial International Partners will contribute at least US$ 7,500 (or €7,500 if based in Europe) per year over 2007, 2008 and 2009. Rates for Commercial International Partners are double those for non-commercial International Partners. By September 2007, 12 organizations had been registered as International Year Partners: The British Geological Survey (BGS), the Geological Society of America (GSA), the European Geoscience Union (EGU), the Geological Survey of Spain (IGME), the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), the American Geophysical Union (AGU), EuroGeoSurveys (EGS), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Norwegian Geological Survey (NGU), the Geological Survey of Japan (AIST), the Society of Exploration Geophysicists (SEG) and the Italian Geological Survey Organization (APAT).

VI. Political support

16. At a high-level information meeting held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 11 February 2004, six nations (Argentina, Brazil, China, Italy, Jordan and Russia) agreed to support the proclamation of the Year once it had been formally proposed in the General Assembly. Decision 171 EX/57, proposed by the United Republic of Tanzania, was adopted (unopposed) by the Executive Board of UNESCO, at its one hundred and seventy-first session on 28 April 2005. Twenty-five nations (Algeria, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Egypt, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Republic of Tanzania) voiced their full support, bringing the number of supporting nations to 36.

17. Adoption of resolution 24, on the proclamation of 2008 as International Year of Planet Earth, by the thirty-third session of the General Conference of UNESCO in October 2005 added the support of another 15 nations (Afghanistan, Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Nigeria,

Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sudan, Togo and United States of America). With the United Republic of Tanzania again taking the lead in a core group of 82 nations, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/192, on 22 December 2005, without a vote, upon the recommendation of the Second Committee. By that resolution, the Assembly decided to declare 2008 the International Year of Planet Earth.

VII. Links with other initiatives

18. In the period 2007-2009, three other Earth-related international-year initiatives will be active: the International Polar Year (IPY), the Electronic Geophysical Year (*e*GY) and the International Heliophysical Year (IHY). On 7 September 2005, an agreement on active cooperation and involvement in each other's science and outreach programmes was signed by the leaders of all science-year initiatives (Celimontana Declaration). As the science programme of the International Year of Planet Earth complies closely with the priorities set by the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), cooperation with GEOSS was formalized on 4 August 2007.

VIII. Organization

19. The organizational structure of the Year evolved as the initiative grew in significance. By mid-2002, IUGS and UNESCO had created an informal Management Team with two major constituents, the Science Programme Committee and an Outreach Programme Committee. Regional representation was covered through China, Africa, Northern America and Latin America. The Management Team was complimented by a Treasurer and a liaison with UNESCO.

20. The Management Team was replaced by a Board of Officers upon the Year's registration as a not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation under the law of the State of Delaware (United States), on 16 March 2006. Until the first Board meeting in January 2007, the Initiators had invited members of the former Management Team to act as Officers of the Board, which also included representatives of IUGS and UNESCO. The Corporation is an independent body controlled by the Initiators, Founding Partners, the chairs of the three main lines of Year activities, and main sponsors, as secured in the Year's statutes. Tax exemption is currently being applied for. All major stakeholders are represented in the Board and are responsible for (strategic) decision-making. Day-to-day operations are conducted through the secretariat, based at the Norwegian Geological Survey (NGU), in Trondheim, Norway, and are led by the Executive Director. The Year of has been placed under the patronage of UNESCO and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) as the Executive Agencies of the United Nations.

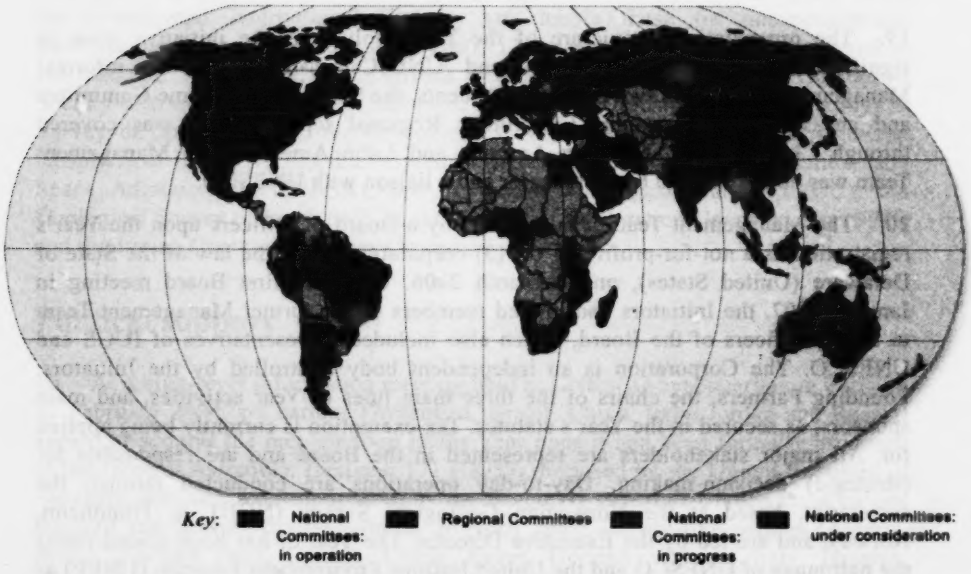
IX. National and regional committees

21. Implementation of the Year's ambitions will be on international and national levels. To that end, National Committees for the Year of Planet Earth have been launched, or are in the process of being launched (see figure). By 3 September 2007, National Committees were operational in 48 countries: Albania, Argentina,

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cameroon, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America and Yemen.

22. In several other nations, including Chile, China, Cuba, Finland, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Suriname, Ukraine and Viet Nam, the creation of such committees is well under way, while still other nations are seriously considering such undertakings. In addition, the IYPE Board granted permission for the development of regional committees for the Year in specific regions where it would be more feasible to establish regional committees than national ones. One Regional Committee was established in East and South-East Asia, covering the 11 nations where the geosciences are addressed by the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (CCOP). Through memorandums of understanding, the national and regional initiatives are formally linked to the Corporation.

Status of National and Regional Committees for the Year



X. Financial aspects

23. Attainment of the aims and objectives of the Year will depend upon attracting substantial financial income from a variety of sources around the world. Financial contributions in cash allocated to the budget in the period 2001-2005 reached a total of US$ 414,900, comprising US$ 133,000 from IUGS, US$ 79,600 from UNESCO

and US$ 202,300 from Founding Partners and Sponsors. In-kind support over that period may be capitalized as close to US$ 1 million.

24. The targeted budget for the implementation of the Year for the Corporation is US$ 5 million. About US$ 20 million (in kind and in cash) has been raised so far by the National Committees for the Year and US$ 1.2 million by the international Corporation.

25. After completion of the triennium, a period of six months will be required for "winding up" activities in 2010 and for reporting to the stakeholders, the General Assembly and the many geoscience communities involved.

26. Three potential main sources of financial support may be identified:

(a) Multinational industry (private companies);

(b) Multinational intergovernmental institutions/development banks/science organizations (donor organizations);

(c) National/regional/local governmental and non-governmental organizations (private companies and donor organizations).

Contributions are anticipated from these bodies both in kind and in cash.

United Nations A/62/377

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 October 2007

Original: English

Sixty-second session
Agenda item 60
Training and research: United Nations Institute for Training and Research

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 60/213 of 22 December 2005. The report highlights training and capacity development activities carried out by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in 2006 and 2007. The report also addresses financial, administrative and procedural issues concerning the Institute, including the status of contributions and its financial situation, proposed reforms to its reporting structure, and the request for harmonization of submission of the reports of the Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNITAR.

With respect to the financial situation of the Institute, it is noted that voluntary contributions remain at an unacceptably low level, despite the growing need for training and capacity development and the greater number of developed countries also benefiting from UNITAR activities.

It is further noted that the Institute is under new leadership, and that a strategic reform plan has been formulated to build on UNITAR achievements, seize new opportunities and meet future challenges in the fields of training and capacity development. The goal of UNITAR is to be a centre of excellence, measured by international standards, recognized within and outside the United Nations system, for standard-setting methodologies, high-quality training and research capacity on knowledge systems. The reform plan's principal proposals, which have been approved by the UNITAR Board of Trustees, are most welcome and should be implemented in partnership with other components of the United Nations system. They are not, however, the subject of this report.

* The submission of the present document was delayed in order to incorporate the latest data provided by UNITAR.

07-52422 (E) 191007

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–11	3
II.	Overview of activities	12–41	4
	A. International affairs, peace and security	14–23	4
	B. Sustainable development and environment	24–36	6
	C. Information and communication technologies	37–41	9
III.	Status of contributions and financial situation of the Institute	42–45	10
IV.	Recommendations	46–48	10

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 60/213, in which the Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed the relevance of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and reiterated that training and capacity development should be accorded a more visible and larger role in support of the management of international affairs and in the execution of the economic and social development programmes of the United Nations.

2. This report has also been prepared in the light of significant changes at UNITAR. After 15 years, the Institute is under new leadership. Carlos Lopes was appointed Executive Director of UNITAR on 1 March 2007. The goal of UNITAR is to be a centre of excellence, measured by international standards, recognized within and outside the United Nations system, for standard-setting methodologies, high-quality training and research capacity on knowledge systems. The Executive Director and his staff have developed a strategic reform plan for UNITAR, which was presented to its Board of Trustees in Geneva on 23 and 24 July 2007. Major reform proposals, endorsed by the Board, are most welcome and should be executed in partnership with other components of the United Nations system. They are based on four strategic priorities, namely: strengthening institutional capacity for training and research; enhancing human capital; building and strengthening strategic partnerships; and rationalizing the organizational structure.

3. These priorities reflect the spirit of General Assembly resolution 60/213, which, inter alia, reaffirmed the importance of a coordinated United Nations systemwide approach to research and training, the need to further develop partnerships in particular at the country level, the relevance of training-related research activities, and the need to ensure fair and equitable geographical distribution and transparency in the preparation of programmes and employment of experts. The present report does not detail these reform proposals, but rather responds to issues raised by the Assembly and provides an update of UNITAR programmatic activities.

4. To date, UNITAR is totally self-funded and does not receive any contributions from the United Nations regular budget for its activities. The level of the voluntary contributions to the General Fund, however, remains very low, putting at risk the core training programmes of the Institute.

5. In its resolution 60/213, the General Assembly renewed its appeal to all Governments, in particular those of developed countries, and to private institutions, to give the Institute their generous financial and other support, and urged the States that have interrupted their voluntary contributions to consider resuming them. In parallel, the Assembly encouraged the Board of Trustees to continue its efforts to broaden its donor base and further increase the contributions to the General Fund. It is noted, in this context that the Board of Trustees decided, in July 2007, to approach the Fifth Committee and various capitals with a view to mobilizing support for the core training programmes of the Institute.

6. The Assembly also called for expeditious resolution of the issues relating to the rent, rental rates and maintenance costs of the Institute. In section XII of its resolution 60/248, the Assembly decided to provide UNITAR with the amount of 242,400 dollars, being the equivalent of the amount of rental, maintenance and other

(b) a regional training programme to enhance conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Africa, which will be held in late 2007;

(c) the training programme to enhance the conflict prevention and peacebuilding capacities of indigenous peoples' representatives, which took place in 2006 in Morocco for French-speaking representatives of Africa, and will be held in 2007 in Australia for indigenous representatives of the Pacific; and

(d) the seminar for special and personal representatives and envoys of the United Nations Secretary-General and senior Headquarters staff, which is organized with the International Peace Academy in association with the United Nations Staff College, and will be held in October 2007 in Switzerland.

21. In 2007, UNITAR also launched a seminar series at United Nations Headquarters for the diplomatic community entitled the "Peace and Security Series". The series discusses recent developments, current challenges and emerging trends at the United Nations, including the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, new tools of the Security Council, international criminal justice and the protection of humanitarian space, the protection of children and youth in armed conflict, United Nations peacebuilding and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on the role of women in peace and conflict. The series is implemented with a number of partners, including select Governments, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Friends of the ICC.

22. Specifically on peacekeeping, UNITAR also works closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to provide self-paced distance courses to students from 129 countries to prepare them to serve in peace support operations. Twenty courses in English, 13 in French, and 12 in Spanish are delivered through e-learning, with over 50,000 enrolments annually.

23. Further, in terms of resources, the Institute has contributed significantly to building institutional memory on lessons learned in United Nations peacemaking and preventive diplomacy.

B. Sustainable development and environment

24. The work of the Institute in the thematic area of sustainable development and environment includes: environmental governance, chemicals and waste management, climate change, and social and human development. Through customized training and workshops, preparation of national profiles, distance learning courses, knowledge-management methodologies, and information-sharing platforms, the training activities on sustainable development and environment have benefited a wide range of stakeholders, from government officials to NGOs and private sector representatives, as well as local authorities.

25. UNITAR work in this field assists countries in achieving their internationally agreed environmental and development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, the World Summit on the Information Society and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

Environmental governance

26. In the area of environmental decision-making, UNITAR is working with 10 countries to strengthen stakeholder engagement. In Central America, for example, it is conducting national self-assessments to gauge implementation capacities of international agreements focusing on public participation in environmental decision-making (such as principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the 1998 Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Aarhus Convention). In South Africa, a methodology to identify practical lessons learned from public participation in environmental decision-making has also been developed.

27. UNITAR also contributes to national implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, within the context of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Platform for Disaster Reduction. In 2007, UNITAR, the Strategy, the International Labour Office and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) created an inter-agency thematic group on space applications for disaster reduction. This initiative, combined with the participation of UNITAR in the newly established United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response programme, is improving access for developing countries to space technologies with a view to reducing vulnerability and preventing risks. UNITAR is currently implementing related activities in Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lake Chad region and Viet Nam.

28. At the municipal or local level, UNITAR works with a network of 12 associated training centres to meet the training needs of local governments worldwide. Specifically, it has conducted 23 training activities for 854 African, Asian, Latin American and European local government officials in the area of urban services management. Recognized by United Nations partners for its contributions in this field, UNITAR was requested in 2007, by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, to co-develop draft guidelines on access to basic services for all, to be presented to the 22nd session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council in 2009.

29. In the field of environmental law, UNITAR introduced in 2007 an online course on the basics of environmental law. Designed to accommodate around 200 participants, over 1,400 applications were received from a varied group of stakeholders, 47 per cent of whom were government officials, the majority of them from the Asia-Pacific region (36 per cent) and Africa (28 per cent). In addition, UNITAR continues to implement its annual fellowship programme on international and comparative environmental law, consisting of an intensive three-week interactive course.

Chemicals and waste management

30. The Institute implements capacity-building efforts in more than 80 developing and transition countries to protect human health and the environment from dangerous chemicals, in particular in the context of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. UNITAR currently has over 40 country-level projects, either planned, approved or ongoing, aimed at executing enabling activities related to implementation of the Strategic Approach. In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and African regions, UNITAR supports regional and national projects to implement the Globally Harmonized System for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. In Latin America, the Institute is assisting countries in

tackling the challenges posed by mercury by creating pollutant release and transfer registers and through risk management training. In addition, UNITAR assists some 60 countries with planning and implementation-related projects for the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions.

31. Plans for future work include collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to assist countries with the implementation of the code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides; closer cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on capacity-building in countries for the Chemical Weapons Convention; and cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe on capacity-building for countries addressing challenges posed by radioactive scrap metal.

Climate change

32. The Institute is also actively involved in a number of activities related to the international process on climate change. It continues to collaborate with other United Nations agencies, notably the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme in the context of technical support for the national adaptation programme of action for least developed countries. In 2006, with its project partners, UNITAR provided training and capacity development on climate change to over 350 stakeholders from 31 principally developing countries.

33. Further in terms of resources, UNITAR, with other United Nations partners, has drafted guidance documents for national teams dealing with the national adaptation programme of action. UNITAR has also developed online collaborative planning and management tools, which are now being used in over 50 countries.

Human and social development

34. The Institute also addresses broad issues of human and social development. Through regional workshops and online courses, it offers training on the legal aspects of public debt management to finance-sector officials, especially from least developed countries and heavily indebted poor countries. In 2007, UNITAR had amassed over 500 hours of training content in this field, drawing both from international and regional expertise.

35. In 2006, UNITAR established a field office in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. A memorandum of agreement was signed with the Niger Delta Development Commission and six of the nine states of the Niger Delta. A five-year capacity development programme for local and regional governments of the Niger Delta has been designed, covering issues such as negotiation and conflict resolution; governance and local administration management; economic and social development planning; environmental protection and compliance; and assessment and monitoring. Implementation started in mid-2006, and more than 400 beneficiaries have thus far received training.

36. Further, at the local level, UNITAR also provides training in fields relating to human and social development. For instance, in 2006-2007, it organized three workshops on strengthening urban security benefiting some 72 participants from the Euro-Mediterranean region and Latin America. Also, through its capacity-building programme for local authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories, 90 local

officials have benefited from leadership and management skills training geared towards strengthening good governance practices.

C. Information and communication technologies

37. The activities of the Institute in the area of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are varied, and range from support to local initiatives, to policy-focused seminars to increase awareness of the links between ICTs and development, to the use of satellite imagery tools to bridge the digital divide. To maximize the reach of its work, UNITAR employs a number of innovative methodologies; it offers e-learning strategies and blended learning approaches; webcasts its policy seminars; and utilizes social networking and other Web 2.0 tools. Beneficiaries range from local actors to national representatives to high-level members of the diplomatic community.

38. UNITAR ICT for development activities support achieving the objectives resulting from the World Summit on the Information Society, as outlined in the Geneva Plan of Action (2003) and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (2005).

39. In 2006, UNITAR launched a web seminar series at United Nations Headquarters for the diplomatic community entitled "ICTs, issues for development". The series provides a forum for critical thinking on how ICTs can further the United Nations development agenda, with specific focus on the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society. Topics covered in 2006 included broadband deployment in developing countries, e-government strategies, technology leadership, information security and Free Open Source Software (FOSS). In 2007, it looked at ICTs and gender, indigenous rights and youth during or in preparation for the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Global Forum on Youth and ICT for Development, respectively. Key outcomes from each event have contributed directly to the work of each forum and emphasize the strategic role of ongoing UNITAR training on ICT policy issues.

40. Also in 2006 at the local level, UNITAR hosted a digital local agenda awareness-raising workshop as a follow-up to the Second World Summit of Cities and Local Authorities on the Information Society (Bilbao Summit), which UNITAR had organized with local partners in Bilbao, Spain, in November 2005, a week prior to the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia. Seven workshops along the same lines were conducted in 2006-2007, through which 141 beneficiaries received training on how to develop digital local agendas at the local level. The workshops promoted the exchange of e-governance good practices among local authorities.

41. Finally, as part of UNITAR research on technology-driven knowledge systems, UNITAR collaborates with the European Organization for Nuclear Research and the European Satellite Operators Association in the areas of satellite telecommunications and integrated mobile systems. Among others, UNITAR and its partners are exploring ways to decrease the digital divide by bringing high speed Internet connectivity to remote and rural areas in developing countries.

III. Status of contributions and financial situation of the Institute

42. The funding of the UNITAR special purpose grant programmes continues to increase satisfactorily; however, the non-earmarked voluntary contributions to the General Fund remain low.

43. In accordance with the financial report for the biennium 2004-2005 transmitted to the Board of Auditors, the total income increased by 75 per cent relative to the income from the previous biennium, from $16,602,541 to $29,135,555. This dramatic increase was owed to the expansion of the special purpose grants funds with increased contributions from Governments and the private sector. Correspondingly, total expenditure increased by 47 per cent from $15,351,787 in 2003 to $22,524,873. Total reserves and fund balances as at 31 December 2005 increased to $12,816,534, from $6,624,062 at the end of the previous biennium. As projects are funded in advance, this reserve is principally earmarked for specific projects.

44. In accordance with the interim financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2006, the overall income showed a decline of 8 per cent, from $13,316,459 in 2004 to $12,273,028 in 2006. Expenditure in fact increased by 30 per cent, from $10,367,714 in 2004 to $13,469,811 in 2006. This situation is explained by the fact that reserves were built up from contributions paid in advance and projects were implemented in 2006 using funds that were paid in 2005.

45. At 31 December 2006 the reserves and fund balance was $9,358,131, in comparison to $9,700,437 in 2004.

IV. Recommendations

46. In line with its objective to be a centre of excellence in its field, UNITAR should concentrate its efforts on strengthening its ability to deliver capacity development activities, including through training, knowledge-sharing, and research on knowledge systems. The strategic reform plan developed by UNITAR, a bold and welcomed proposal, should receive full support from other components of the United Nations system.

47. Among others, UNITAR will require material support as it implements these reforms and in the conduct of future activities. As a first priority, the Fifth Committee should reconsider the issue of financing UNITAR core training activities from the United Nations regular budget. In parallel, Member States should commit to increasing or resuming their contributions to the Institute.

48. Member States should consider positively the proposals to submit the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council rather than to the General Assembly (see para. 9 above) and to harmonize the submission of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director (see para. 10 above).